



U.S. Department
of Transportation
**Federal Aviation
Administration**

Memorandum

Subject: Environmental Impacts of Instrument
Flight Procedures

Date: July 23, 1996

From: Manager, National Flight Procedures
Office, AVN-100

Reply to
Attn. of:

To: Branch Managers, National Flight
Procedures Office, AVN-110, AVN-120,
AVN-130, AVN-140, AVN-150, AVN-160

This memo establishes the National Flight Procedures Office (NFPO) policy regarding environmental responsibilities and procedures. This policy is based on review of Order 1050.1D (Policy and Procedures for Considering Environmental Impacts), Memorandum of Agreement (August 24, 1995), an agreement between FAA and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) (currently effective), and the planned changes soon to be incorporated in Order 1050.1E. Order 1050.1E (in coordination) better explains Aviation System Standards (AVN) responsibilities under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and how to efficiently discharge those responsibilities.

The introduction of GPS to the National Airspace System significantly increased the requests for new instrument flight procedures. The following environmental policy and attached guide have been coordinated with the Office of Environmental and Energy (AEE) and are provided in advance of Order 1050.1E to permit AVN personnel to correctly evaluate environmental impacts.

All instrument flight procedures shall be designed to minimize the effect of aircraft noise on the environment. The following guidelines shall be employed to the extent practicable in designing instrument flight procedures.

a. Avoid establishing procedures routes over noise sensitive areas.

b. Establish IFR routes of ingress and egress that correspond to locally established and accepted VFR routes.

c. Establish IFR altitudes no lower than locally established and accepted VFR altitudes for the particular vicinity.

d. Use not less than the optimum descent gradient prescribed for each procedural segment.

The following guidelines should be followed when considering environmental impacts of proposed instrument flight procedures. Meanings and definitions are explained in Order 1050.1D. NFPO Branch Managers are the Responsible Federal Official (RFO) for actions relating to instrument approach and departure procedures. They are delegated the approval authority for categorical exclusions (CE), environmental assessments (EA), findings of no significant impact (FONSI), and associated records of decision (ROD). Order 1100.154A, Delegation of Authority, clarifies the delegation of approval authority and the role of regional administrators and the deputy regional administrator in environmental matters.

In many instances, a new or revised instrument procedure qualifies for categorical exclusion when it does not individually or cumulatively have a significant effect on the human environment. If the proposal fits the description of a CE, the RFO must ensure that no extraordinary circumstances exist, i.e., being highly controversial on environmental basis as determined by a Federal, State, or local government agency or by a substantial number of persons impacted by such action. If any extraordinary circumstance exists, the proposal will be subject to an EA or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). If it is uncertain whether an extraordinary circumstance exists, further consultation with the appropriate officials should be conducted and documented. If the results of the consultation are still uncertain, the proposal will be subject to an EA or EIS. If no extraordinary circumstances exist, the RFO may issue a CE determination.

After determining that an extraordinary circumstance exists, a modification of the instrument procedure may be recommended to eliminate those impacts. If the modification is acceptable to the RFO, the proposed procedure may be categorically excluded.

Each NFPO Branch may require that a proponent provide the necessary environmental data required to support an agency determination regarding a proposed action. Requirements to support an environmental action relating to a proposed instrument procedure, that cannot be categorically excluded, should be forwarded to Manager, Environmental, Energy, and Safety Division, ANS-500, who is the AAF focal point for Environmental Impact Studies.

The attached guide provides the minimum information which should be documented when a project is determined to be categorically excluded. The RFO determines what documentation is adequate for each CE and ensures that it is placed in a permanent project file for future reference.



Michael J. Miressi

Attachments
N7210.360
FAA EIS Flow Charts
Sample Categorical Exclusion

FLIGHT PROCEDURES DEVELOPMENT BRANCH GUIDE FOR DOCUMENTING A
CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION (CE)

I. General Guidelines

Federal actions which do not individually or cumulatively have a significant effect on the human environment may qualify for an EIS under NEPA. The Responsible Federal Official (RFO) must determine that extraordinary circumstances, as defined in the current FAA Order 1050.1, do not apply. Additionally, the RFO must ensure that the proposed action would not have a significant impact on the visual nature of the surrounding land uses.

As provided herein, the RFO documents the basis for the CE determination and places the document in a permanent project file. The summary of categorically excluded action is provided here for documenting the correct basis for the CE. Other information should be provided as deemed necessary by the RFO in order to provide adequate documentation for the project file.

II. Categorical Exclusion List

A. Establishment of Global Positioning System (GPS) or Flight Management System (FMS) procedures that overlay existing procedures.

B. Procedures actions and/or certification covered by a previously filed EIS or FONSI, when environmental circumstances have not changed.

C. Publishing of existing air traffic control procedures that do not change existing tracks or create new tracks if the altitude and concentration of aircraft on these tracks does not change.

D. New procedures that routinely route aircraft over non-noise sensitive areas and, when applicable, have been found to meet the requirements of FAA Notice 7210.360.

E. Establishment or modification of instrument approach procedures, departure procedures, or enroute procedures which have been found to meet the requirements of FAA Notice 7210.360 and where no public controversy is anticipated.

F. Action involving the application of instrument approach procedures.

G. Actions not designed to change the flight track(s) of jet aircraft over the ground, or not likely to cause a shift in noise contours over noise sensitive areas.

H. Action such as a new scheduled service that does not produce an increase of 15 percent or greater in operations with the same fleet mix (for example, percentages of small propeller, turboprop, turbojet, etc., similar to those that currently exist).

I. If the action is a test of air traffic control changes, the change will last not more than 2 months, will be conducted in accordance with a test plan, and will revert to the original procedures after the test is terminated.

III. Documentation - Use the following format when writing a Categorical Exclusion:

Proposed Action:

1. This action qualifies for consideration as a categorically excluded action as it fall under the following specific CE provision (use approved list):

2. Other supporting Information (use appropriate information):

3. The above-referenced action has been reviewed by the FAA, and it has been determined by the undersigned to be categorically excluded from further environmental documentation according to Order 1050.1, AVN policy, and those items specifically provided above, since none of the extraordinary circumstances listed in Order 1050.1 apply to its implementation.

Approval

Prepared by:
(AVN-100 Procedures Specialist)
Title:

Date:

Responsible Federal Official:
(AVN-100 Branch Manager)
Title:

Date: